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The Thirteen Principles of Witchcraft

The Council of American Witches (now defunct) adopted the 13 Principles of Witchcraft in April of 1974. Although many modern-day Witches are unfamiliar with the C.A.W., the Council's principles are widely adhered to just the same. They are as follows:

1) We practice rites to attune ourselves with the natural rhythm of life forces marked by the phases of the Moon and the seasonal Quarters and Cross-quarters.

2) We recognize that our intelligence gives us a unique responsibility toward our environment. We seek to live in harmony with Nature, in ecological balance offering fulfillment to life and consciousness within an evolutionary concept.

3) We acknowledge a depth of power far greater than that apparent to the average person. Because it is far greater than ordinary it is sometimes called supernatural, but we see it as lying within that which is naturally potential to all.

4) We conceive of the Creative Power in the universe as manifesting through polarity – as masculine and feminine – and that this same Creative Power lies in all people, and functions through the interaction of the masculine and feminine. We value neither above the other, knowing each to be supportive to the other. We value sex as pleasure, as the symbol and embodiment of life, and as one of the sources of energies used in magickal practice and religious worship.

5) We recognize both outer worlds and inner, or psychological, worlds sometimes known as the Spiritual World, the Collective Unconsciousness, Inner Planes, etc. – and we see in the interaction of these two dimensions the basis for paranormal phenomena and magickal exercises. We neglect neither dimension for the other, seeing both as necessary for our fulfillment.

6) We do not recognize any authoritarian hierarchy, but do honor those who teach, respect those who share their greater knowledge and wisdom, and acknowledge those have courageously given of themselves in leadership.

7) We see religion, magick, and wisdom in living as being united in the way one views the world and lives within it – a world view and philosophy of life which we identify as Witchcraft – the Pagan Way.

8) Calling oneself a Witch does not make a Witch – but neither does heredity itself, nor the collecting of titles, degrees, and initiations. A Witch seeks to control the forces within her/himself that make life possible in order to live wisely and well without harm to others and in harmony with Nature.

9) We believe in the affirmation and fulfillment of life in a continuation of evolution and development of consciousness giving meaning to the Universe we know and our personal role within it.

10) Our only animosity towards Christianity, or towards any other religion or philosophy of life, is to the extent that it's institutions have claimed to be 'the only way', and have sought to deny freedom to others and to suppress other ways of religious practice and belief.

11) As American Witches, we are not threatened by debates on the history of the Craft, the origins of various terms, the legitimacy of various aspects of different traditions. We are concerned with our present and our future.

12) We do not accept the concept of absolute evil, nor do we worship any entity known as Satan, or the Devil, as defined by the Christian tradition. We do not seek power through the sufferings of others, nor accept that personal benefit can be derived only by denial to another.

13) We believe that we should seek within Nature that which is contributory to our health and well-being.

[The above principles are now in the public domain.]